

Martinez police seek killer of 9-year-old boy

MON JAN 26 1987
By Terry Link
The Tribune

MARTINEZ — In this normally quiet waterfront community, where a single person was murdered all of last year, two people were stabbed to death Saturday, one of them a 9-year-old boy.

As he road his bicycle the few short blocks between his own home and that of his aunt, young Eric Coy was stabbed fatally by an unknown assailant. The third-grader's body was found about 11:15 a.m. beside Alhambra Creek, in a wooded area behind Martinez Junior High School.

The Martinez Police Department mobilized five detectives, 15 uniformed officers, five reserve officers and seven cadets in the search for the boy's killer, said Cmdr. Dave Cutaia.

when he reached his aunt's house, Coy said. When Eric didn't call, the parents called the



Eric Coy

Body found in wooded area

Riding his motocross bicycle

"All the resources of the department are involved," Cutaia said yesterday.

"We are looking at anything and everything. We are not limiting ourselves," Cutaia said.

He said police have no suspects or motive for the slaying.

Four hours later and a mile and a half away, a 24-year-old man was found stabbed and bleeding in the gutter outside his home at 35 Adelaide St., just outside the city limits. The man was found at 3:30 p.m. and died at 7:21 p.m. at John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek.

Contra Costa County sheriff's deputies said the man did not identify his assailant before he died, but deputies believe the victim knew his attacker. The victim was tentatively identified at the Contra Costa Coroner's

Office yesterday, but his family has not been notified so his name was withheld.

Twenty-four emotional hours after the death of his son Eric, Dan Coy sat on the steps of his duplex yesterday, reminiscing and grieving for the murdered child.

"The good kids are the ones taken from us," said Coy, who wavered between grief and anger yesterday.

Eric was from a close-knit family in Martinez and attended the third grade at Las Juntas School. He was described as a friendly boy, but one who knew better than to talk to strangers.

"He just loved people," said Ruth Coy of her grandson.

"But he would not take up

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Martinez

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with strangers. He was a street smart boy," said grandfather Avery Coy, who has lived in Martinez for 36 years. He said he couldn't remember "anything like this ever happening."

The child's body was found in the wooded area behind the junior high school, two blocks from his home. Eric often visited his aunt and grandparents nearby. The grandparents said he used the shortcut through the woods.

Coy said Eric left home at 11:05 a.m. to visit his aunt who lived a few blocks away. His usual route took him from his Warren Street home through school grounds.

The boy was told to call home when he reached his aunt's house, Coy said. When Eric didn't call, the parents called the aunt, who hadn't seen the boy. Coy began searching, checking other parts of the town before he arrived at the wooden footbridge near Alhambra Creek about 11:40 a.m. and spoke with a police officer.

"He told me my son was murdered — not killed — but murdered," Coy said.

Cutaia said the body was found by police and firefighters who responded to an emergency call about a bicycle accident at the footbridge crossing Alhambra Creek into the west side of the Martinez Junior High School on Arriba Steet.

The creekbanks are lined with brush and trees in which students and neighborhood children often congregate, Cutaia said.

Homicide is a rare occurrence here and the death of Eric Coy shocked youngsters like Jesse Morgan, 13, and Nick Gunari, 11. They admitted to being "a little scared" yesterday as they looked where Eric, clad in a black jacket and gray sweat-pants, was found.

Parents were fearful. "I feel really horrible inside, and I've always felt very safe," said Margie Bryce.

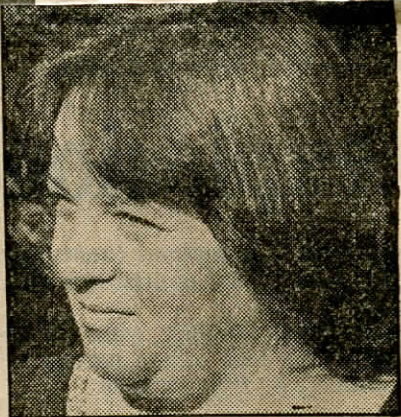
"I'm going to be worried until the police catch somebody," said Bill Belon, whose home abuts the footbridge.

Other neighborhood children riding bicycles along the narrow streets near the Coy home said their parents warned them not to ride alone.

Riding his motocross bicycle was Eric's favorite recreation, the slain boy's father said.

"He was a very active kid and he loved that bike," he said.

Then, as the memory of his



Barbara Coy

Mother of slain third grader

son filled his thoughts, Coy's voice turned bitter. He said he "would love to watch the SOB (his son's killer) die. They could let me in the cage and I would strangle him myself."

The coroner's office said an autopsy would be performed today.

Barbara Lynne Harris and Jim Greaver contributed to this report.

Police seek man seen at murder scene

TUE JAN 27 1987

By Frank Wootten

The Tribune

MARTINEZ — Police Chief Robert "Bud" Markwith said yesterday authorities are looking for a man who was spotted near the school grounds here where 9-year-old Eric Coy was murdered Saturday.

Markwith said police want to talk to the man, who is not necessarily a suspect. A composite drawing of the man is being made and will be ready for release today.

Markwith expressed confidence that the case will be solved and said some "things" were picked up at the crime scene near a footbridge leading to the back of the school grounds. He declined to elaborate.

Meanwhile, worried parents here said yesterday they will escort their children to and from school until the case is solved.

"My husband is really worried and he says we are going to take David to school and pick him up until they find out who did it," said Cuanna DeBonneville.

David, 13, is a student at Mar-

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into the van and driven around the city, then sexually assaulted. Around 5 p.m. when the van stopped for a signal in the van

tinez Junior High School where Coy was stabbed Saturday morning. Coy was taking a shortcut on his bicycle through the school grounds to visit his aunt a few blocks away.

There was a traffic jam on the narrow street at the school's entrance yesterday as a few dozen cars — three or four times the usual number — arrived to pick up students.

"I'll be concerned until they find out who did it," said Larry Ashland who went to the school to pick up his son Aron. "How do we know it's not a psycho who pulled this? If it is, we're all in trouble."

Markwith said the FBI has been asked to do a psychological profile of the killer, who police suspect may be a transient. Authorities have not found the murder weapon, which they have described as some type of sharp instrument.

Police have set up a 24-hour hotline at 229-1699 for citizens who might have information regarding the case.

Teachers informed students of the killing yesterday at the junior high school and at Las Juntas School two miles away where Coy was a third grader. Counse-

lors and nurses also are being made available to the students.

"The children in Eric's class are doing the best they can," said Rob Buoncristiani, principal of Las Juntas School. "Things like nightmares and loss of appetite don't crop up until several weeks later."

Buoncristiani speaks from previous experience — two other pupils at the school have died within the past five months.

Joey Garcio drowned in September while on a vacation trip with his parents. Dallas Grondalski, 5, was shot and killed along with her parents and older brother in Fort Bragg in October, two days after she transferred out of her kindergarten class here.

The bodies of the Grondalskis were found in their newly rented home, which had been set afire. That crime is still unsolved.

"Eric was a likable boy who was always smiling," Buoncristiani said. "Just last week he won a good citizen award by caring for the environment and returning lost articles."

"He was watching to keep things clean without being told. He had a big smile when he got his award," Buoncristiani said.

Parents at Las Juntas School

also were driving and walking their children to school.

Police monitored the junior high school campus throughout the day to make the students feel more comfortable. Pupils on both campuses were reminded to avoid strangers and to remain in groups while going to and from school.

Linda Pearson, vice principal of the junior high school, said several students told her, "Things like this don't happen in Martinez."

"It's a small town and this is shaking up the people," Pearson said.

There was only one murder in the city last year.

City Manager Jack Garner, the former police chief, said the apparent randomness of the killing has him concerned.

Tom Popp, a Pleasant Hill painting contractor, said he has opened an Eric Coy Memorial Fund at the Main Street branch of the Bank of America here to accept donations for the family.

He said he hires Coy's father, Don, whenever there is painting work, but much of the time the father is unemployed.

Donations may be sent to the Bank of America at P.O. Box 231, Martinez, 94553.

Police issue sketch of man sought in boy's stabbing

By Marina Gottschalk
The Tribune

WED JAN 28 1987

MARTINEZ — Police yesterday released a composite drawing of a young man who was seen hanging around the Martinez Junior High School campus Saturday morning before 9-year-old Eric Coy was killed.

"We want to talk to the man because he was in the area," said Police Chief Robert Markwith. He is not necessarily a suspect, Markwith said.

"We don't have any suspects. We're not ruling anyone out," he said, including a

neighbor with whom the boy's father had a verbal altercation Friday night.

"There was an indication that threats were made," Markwith said. He would not say who made the threats.

A man and his son were in the area Saturday morning and saw the man of whom the composite was made, Markwith said.

He described the man as a light-skinned male, possibly Latin, aged 18 to 21, 5 feet 8 inches tall, 165 pounds, muscular build, medium-length black hair combed straight back, dark eyes. He was

carrying a collapsible umbrella.

The composite will be shown to residents in the area to determine if anyone has seen the man, Markwith said.

An autopsy performed Monday indicated the cause of death was due to multiple stab wounds made with a sharp object, Markwith said. There were no more than 10 wounds.

The murder weapon has not been located.

Markwith would not comment on a rumor that the boy's throat had been slashed.

More than 50 calls have been received on the hotline (229-1699) police set up Monday.

"There are some good leads which we are following up and some not-so-good leads," Markwith said.

Officers are still patrolling the Arreba Street footbridge area where the boy's body was found.

Funeral services for Eric Coy will be held at 7:30 p.m. tomorrow at the Connolly and Taylor funeral home, 4000 Alhambra Ave., Martinez. Visitation will be between noon and 9 p.m.

Police report getting big response to sketch in Martinez boy's stabbing

THU JAN 29 1987 cc

MARTINEZ — No new leads have developed in the murder last Saturday of 9-year-old Eric Coy, but police have had good response to a composite drawing released Tuesday.

More than 100 calls were received on the hotline (229-1699) set up Monday. People have reported seeing the man depicted in the drawing as far away as Fairfield, Police Chief Robert Markwith said yesterday.

The man in the composite was seen on the Martinez Junior High School campus within two hours of the boy's death and police want to question him.

Markwith said the boy's parents have been shown the drawing and believe they have seen the man before. The chief noted

that the man could be a friend of Benjamin Gomez, a neighbor with whom Dan Coy, the boy's father had an argument Friday night.

Gomez voluntarily went to the police department Tuesday after learning police wanted to talk with him, Markwith said. The delay was due to the fact that Gomez does not always live in the Martinez house.

The murder weapon still has not been located, Markwith said. It is believed to be a double-edged sharp object, based on the autopsy findings.

Officers are still being assigned to patrol the Arreba Street footbridge, which leads into the playing field at the junior high school. The boy's body was found near there.

Chief: Progress made in search for solution to stabbing

FRI JAN 30 1987 cc

Marina Gottschalk
The Tribune

MARTINEZ — Police Chief Robert Markwith yesterday said progress has been made in the investigation of last Saturday's killing of 9-year-old Eric Coy, but the chief revealed few details.

Markwith said new information had come to police through a special hotline.

In addition, a reward fund has been established for information leading to the arrest and conviction in connection with the stabbing of the boy. Markwith said an anonymous donor contributed \$1,000 to the reward fund.

More than 200 calls have been received on the hotline number (229-1699), Markwith said.

Some callers provided descriptions that helped police put together a composite drawing of a man seen at Martinez Junior High School, before the boy's body was discovered near the back edge of the school grounds. Police want to question the man.

Markwith responded with "no comment" to questions about possible suspects or whether police are seeking search warrants.

Because of the shock of the murder, the county Mental Health Department will hold a community support meeting Saturday.

The Police Department has considered using a psychic to aid in the investigation. Several have contacted the police, the chief said.

Because of the shock and emotional reaction in the the community to the boy's murder, Stuart McCullough, director of the Contra Costa County Mental Health Department, and his staff are hosting a community support meeting at 2 p.m. Saturday at the Merrithew Memorial Hospital cafeteria.

Anyone interested in contributing to the reward fund should send donations to the Coy Reward Fund, c/o John Muir National Bank, P.O. Box 3030, Martinez, Ca 94553.

New lead in hunt for Martinez boy's killer

Police drawing of Atherton robbery suspect resembles man sought in slaying

SAT FEB 7 1987

By Marina Gottschalk
The Tribune

MARTINEZ — Police here are conferring with Atherton authorities about what they say are similarities in drawings both cities have released of criminal suspects, including one who is believed to have killed a 9-year-old Martinez boy last month.

Martinez police released their composite drawing Jan. 27 of a young man seen on the grounds of Martinez Junior High School within two hours of the stabbing death of 9-year-old Eric Coy Jan. 24.

Several days later, Atherton police released a drawing of a young man who went on a two-state crime spree that began in the small, well-to-do community on the Peninsula.

A suspect in that case, identified as Luke Collura, 16, is now in custody in Riverside.

On Jan. 30, Collura allegedly entered a Sutherland Drive home in Atherton and, armed with a gun, locked a couple in their basement and ransacked and burglarized the house, Atherton police said. The suspect then fled with the couples' 17-

year-old daughter, Gina Moore, driving off in her parents' vehicle, according to Atherton police.

On Jan. 31, Moore asked a man in Reno, Nev., for a ride, according to police, and Collura then forced the man into his car. After driving him around for a while, the man was released, police said.

Collura and Moore next hit Las Vegas, where they abducted two women and stole their car, according to police.

They then went to Riverside County on Feb. 1, police said.

where Moore robbed a donut shop, taking donuts and \$100 in cash. She ran to a waiting car, according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, and she and Collura were subsequently apprehended by the California Highway Patrol.

Collura and Moore are in custody in Riverside, charged with armed robbery and grand theft.

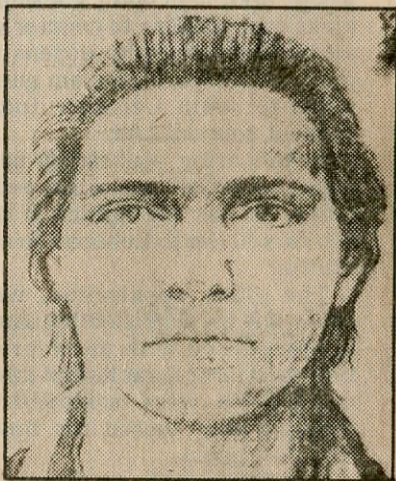
Meanwhile, Martinez police are still pursuing leads received over a hot line established two days after the killing of the 9-year-old youth.



Suspect in Martinez case.

The boy was stabbed a number of times with a double-edged, sharp instrument, which has not been found.

Several people matching the



Suspect in Atherton case.

description of the suspect in the composite drawing have been contacted, Martinez police said, but none have not been connected with the boy's murder.

Arrest in death of Vallejo boy

By Marina Gottschalk
The Tribune

THU MAR 5 1987

Coy, Eric
VALLEJO — A police hanger-on who helped search for 6-year-old Jeremy Stoner and attended his funeral was arrested for investigation of kidnapping and murder yesterday.

Police arrested Shawn Quincy Melton, 26, who lived a mile from the Stoner family, based on an anonymous telephone tip from Berkeley on Tuesday.

Police knew Melton because he worked as a freelance security guard and frequently involved himself in police business by trying to help officers with their cases.

He was one of the volunteers who searched for Jeremy when the boy disappeared Feb. 21. Jeremy's nude and strangled body was found four days later in the tules off Sherman Island Road in the Sacramento Delta.

Melton attended the candlelight vigil for Jeremy on Sunday night, as well as the funeral Monday morning, where he talked to several people about the "classic profile" of a child killer.

"Just like in the movies, he was right under our noses and we didn't see him," said Lt. Al Lehman, who with a team of eight Vallejo police investigators has worked around the clock to find Jeremy's killer.

Lehman said the tip led to other evidence, although he would not say what evidence police have or whether Melton has confessed.

"There is the possibility of another arrest," Lehman added, refusing to elaborate.

He said Melton, who is 5-foot-1 and weighs 200 lbs., is a "loner with an alcohol problem," which fits an FBI psycho-

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last night.

Melton's mobile home in E

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logical profile in cases such as this.

Two days after Jeremy disappeared, Melton went to the Stoners' home and offered his services as a "detective" to Jon and Karen Stoner, according to Dwight Stoner, the boy's uncle.

"I can't believe someone would be that sick to go to the home, the vigil and the funeral," he said.

Jon and Karen Stoner have been in seclusion since the boy's body was found.

"They're holding up pretty well. (Tuesday) was really hard for them. It would have been Jeremy's seventh birthday," he said.

The parents were notified about Melton's arrest early yesterday morning, said Dwight Stoner. "They hope it's really the right guy and that he won't be released."

"This is the lowest crime on earth," Stoner said. "If there's still a death penalty I hope they use it."

Melton's only other arrest was in 1983 for writing a bad check, Lehman said.

Melton was being held at the Vallejo branch of the Solano County Jail, a Vallejo police department representative said last night.

When he was brought to the Vallejo Police Department yesterday afternoon for further questioning, he told the press: "I didn't do it. I gave information to them, and they used it against me."

Melton's parents and wife would not talk to the media yesterday.

"I know he didn't do it and that's all I'm going to say," said a younger brother, Chris.

Although police have conducted an intensive and exhaustive investigation into Jeremy Stoner's kidnapping and murder,

Melton didn't emerge as a suspect until they received the anonymous telephone tip, Lehman said.

Melton went to the police station shortly after police got the tip, Lehman said, "to give me some information he said he gathered in the case."

Melton left and returned late in the afternoon on his own to talk about the Stoner case again, unaware that the police investigation now was focusing on him.

He did not leave the station and was booked for kidnapping and murder at 1 a.m.

Martinez police are trying to determine whether Melton might have been involved in the Jan. 24 stabbing death there of 9-year-old Eric Coy.

"We've had two detectives (in Vallejo) all night. They're still there," said Martinez police Cmdr. Dave Cutaia late yesterday.

Cutaia said they didn't know if there was any connection between Melton and the Coy case.

Eric Coy was found dead at a high school playing field near his home.

It has not yet been established if Jeremy Stoner was sexually molested, Lehman said. "We're still looking into that. The autopsy was inconclusive."

Neighbors with children near Melton's mobile home in Bailey's Trailer Court on Benicia Road said Melton had not bothered their children. Several were surprised by Melton's arrest.

Linda Price, who lives across the street from the trailer park, was physically shaking. Jeremy and her 6-year-old son, Timothy, were classmates at Annie Pennycook Elementary School.

"Jeremy used to come over to play with my kids. Sometimes his mother would drop him off. Sometimes he would walk through the field," said Price, who with her children searched

the field when they heard Jeremy was missing.

Timothy Price said Melton never bothered him.

Dan and Sandy Boyles, who live across the street from the trailer park, said Melton, a 1980 Hogan High School graduate, used to tell people he was working for the police.

"When we talked to him he talked about going after people on drugs. He said he was working with the police and if we knew anything we should tell him and he would pass it on to the police," Boyles said.

Sandy Boyles said Melton was an Avon Products dealer until a year ago, and also recalled that Melton was a frequent customer at a comic book store her family operated.

"He used to get real involved in the comic books," she said.

Melton and his wife lived in the trailer park for the past several years.

Their small brown and white mobile home had a neat exterior appearance. There was a MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) sticker in one of the windows. The Meltons have no children.

Larry Sweaza described Melton as a quiet person who kept to himself.

"I'd see him go to work, come home and be with his wife. It's such a surprise. Especially him, he's such a quiet person."

Lee Miller, another trailer park resident and former manager, also was shocked.

"He never had kids around," said Miller.

Melton's vehicle, a late-model black and silver Chevrolet Mikado, was parked in the police garage.

Stickers on the rear bumper said, "I (heart) police" and "Beam Me Up Scotty." The license plate frame said, "To Know Me Is To Love Me."